WEST, Andrew F.
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NOTE

The subjoined article was mailed April 6th to the Philadelphia *Presbyterian,* the Pittsburgh *Presbyterian Banner* and the Cincinnati *Herald and Presbyter* and a few other papers.

ANDREW F. WEST.

MR. SUNDAY AND PRINCETON

As a member of the Presbyterian Church and a teacher in Princeton University for over thirty years may I ask, in view of recently published criticisms, that you will print this statement giving some of the reasons why Mr. Sunday was not invited to hold his meetings here under the auspices and with the endorsement of the University.

Let me say emphatically that it was not because Mr. Sunday's teachings are evangelical. Far from it. Princeton was founded and has lived on the fundamental, historical, evangelical Christian faith, and with few exceptions no other gospel has been heard here. The attitude of President Hibben and the authorities is in accord with this, no matter what passing difficulties may arise.

Nevertheless, there are grave reasons why Princeton University should not favor Mr. Sunday's methods as likely to do good to our students. He has been free to come, as he did, and our students have been entirely free to hear him, as they did in large numbers,—but not on invitation nor with the encouragement of the authorities of the University. Why not? Let me state some of the reasons:

1. In matters of religion there is only one standard for Christians and that standard is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I gladly admit that Mr. Sunday means to be evangelical in his statements. But many of his utterances are, to put it mildly, not Christlike, and some of them are travesties of the teaching of Christ. Take the following sample, less vulgar than many others, which is both a caricature and a perversion of one of the most sacred scenes in the New Testament:

> "Mary was one of these sort of uneeda biscuit, peanut butter, gelatin and pimento sort of women.

"Martha was a beefsteak, baked potato, apple sauce with lemon and nutmeg, coffee and whipped cream, apple pie and cheese sort of women.

"So you can have your pick, but I speak for Martha. So the churches have a lot of Marthas and a lot of Marys—merely bench warmers. Hurrah for Martha!"

"So Martha was getting dinner and poked her head in the door where Mary was sitting and said:

" 'Mary, carest thou not that I serve alone?'

"Wouldn't it make you tired if you were doing all the work and had your hands all over dough and the sweat rolling off as you cooked the potatoes, if your big lazy sister was sitting doing nothing? Then Jesus said:

" 'Tut, tut, Martha, thou carest for too many little things.'

"And there was Mary—remember Mary—loafing on the job, When I tell you a good thing don't loaf on the job."

What excuse can be offered for this? It was Christ who said of Mary on that occasion that "one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Mr. Sunday knows better, and has taken it away. And if this is not trifling with the one vital essential of Christian faith, what is? Let us leave aside here the cheap wit by which the holy scene has been degraded. Would not the vulgarity have been enough without falsifying the teaching of Christ?

Moreover, the ease and apparent satisfaction with which Mr. Sunday consigns to perdition those he denounces is not becoming. There are plenty of coarse quotations to be had on this point, such as "rotting in hell." When a man "preaches hell," at least let him do it with awe and pity, and not with words of jesting and contempt. Yet here is one of Mr. Sunday's milder statements, unhesitatingly sending to hell one-half of the members of the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian communions:

"You Methodists can talk about infant baptism, and the Presbyterians can howl about perseverence and

half of the members will persevere in hell, and the Baptists can howl about water and half of your members go where you can't get a drop."

Do you approve of this?

Then take these remarks about the Holy Spirit:

"Do you think the Holy Spirit wants to look through eyes bloated and red from last night's revelry? Do you think the Holy Spirit wants to speak through a breath stinking with limburger cheese and beer?

"Do you think it wants to walk in a pair of feet that walk out of the church one day and into the saloon the next?

"Do you think the Holy Spirit wants to see out of eyes that gaze into the Bible one day and the next day into a little cheap-skate theatre to see a woman dance around on her toes without enough clothes on to flag a hand-car?

"You must clean up. Don't you think the Holy Spirit wants to dwell in clean men and women? The Holy Spirit don't want to take a bath in beer and swim around in a pool of booze. Not on your life it don't. Not on your tin-type."

I pass over the description of the Holy Spirit as "it." But what about the gross coarseness of parts of this passage! Is such low and flashy language or anything like it ever found in the mouth of Christ and his Apostles?

Take another and worse instance where Christ in prayer is turned to a jesting use:

"'And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered.' Ladies, do you want to look pretty? If some of you women would spend less on dope, pazaza and cold cream, and get down on your knees and pray, God would make you prettier."

Very funny, no doubt; and very blasphemous.

Take another passage, lively and revolting:

"I've always had a great deal of sympathy with the Irishman who went to the priest and confessed that he had committed a murder.

" 'Terrible!' said the priest. 'How was it? Who was it?'

"The Irishman said that he had gone out in a boat with a Jew, and that presently they began to discuss religion, and that presently they dropped the 'dis'. Finally the Irishman in his anger overturned the boat and drowned the Jew.

" 'Your reverence', said the Irishman, 'as the Jew came up, I grabbed him by the neck and said: Now will you be a good Catholic? and he said No. Then I held his head under for a long time and when I let him up again I said: Now will you be a good Catholic? and he said Yes.

" 'Then, your reverence, I ducked his head under and kept it there till he was drowned. I wanted to make sure of him while I had him.'

"I've sometimes thought, almost, that it might be a Godsend to many a community if it could only be swept by typhoid fever or pneumonia or scarlet fever just after a good revival and before the people had a chance to slide back."

"Almost" thinking it "might be a Godsend" if God would sweep away by a plague those who had just professed their faith in Christ! and telling with "a great deal of sympathy" the horrible story of an Irishman murdering a Jew! Do you approve of this?

2. At times Mr. Sunday is irreverently familiar toward God. This appears clearly in the scene at his Philadelphia meeting on January 8th:

"Why if I thought I could get any nearer God by kneeling, or get nearer to Him by taking off my coat, I'd do it."

Here Sunday suited the action to the word and tore his coat from his back. Seizing it by the collar in his right hand, he flung it around to lend emphasis to his utterances.

"If God Almighty can't bless a man in his shirt sleeves," he shouted, "He's a mighty queer sort of a God."

Billy slipped into his coat again and grinned at his audience, who responded with laughter and applause.

And in this remark:

"Well, Jesus, I don't know why I should talk until my clothes are wringing wet trying to tell people what they should know if they had a scintilla of brains."

Here is another sample:

"When I am at heaven's gates, I'll be free from old Philly's blood. I can see now the Day of Judgment when the question of Philadelphia and of me is taken up by God.

" 'You were down in Philly, weren't you, Billy?' the Lord will ask me.

"And I'll say to Him, Yes sir, Lord, I was there.

" 'Did you give them my message of salvation, Billy?'

"I gave them your message, Lord. I gave it to them the best way I could and as I understood it. You go get the files of the Philadelphia papers. They printed my sermons, Lord. You'll see in them what I preached, will be my answer.

"And the Lord will say, 'Come on in, Bill; you're free from Philadelphia's blood.' "

Is this the way the Bible speaks? There is no place in that book for swaggering impiety. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord" is the right attitude of soul in the presence of God. Mr. Sunday is speaking impudently in the presence of "the King eternal, immortal and invisible" to whom alone is due "honor and glory forever"—even now, even at Mr. Sunday's performances. It was Jonathan Edwards, an early President of Princeton, who wrote of these sublime words in hushed awe as he gazed from his window one autumn day: "As I read them the whole forest seemed to glow." No irreverence there. Is not the devout fear of God the "beginning of wisdom" still, and is it not deeply needed in American life today?

3. Many of Mr. Sunday's remarks are personally abusive or disgusting or slanderous. Take without comment the following series:

"Do you think God wants you to walk down the

aisle Sunday morning in the rotten feet that had been out dancing the dirty tango the night before? No! Then get your rotten carcass out of the church."

"If a woman on the avenue plays a game of cards in her home, she is worse than any blackleg gambler in the slums."

"If a minister believes and teaches evolution, he is a stinking skunk, a hypocrite and a liar."

"If I were the wife of some of you men, I'd refuse to clean their old spittoons. I say, let every hog clean his own trough."

"They talk about the excitement of a revival meeting being bad in any community. If you say that, then you are a dirty, rotten, stinking liar! Did you get it? They never did anything for Christ in their lives. Peanut-headed fools, that's what they are."

"A drunkard makes me sick. It makes me sick to see in a community like this dirty, stinking hell holes of corruption, vomiting, puking, spewing out damnation."

"Your wife has as good a right to line up before a bar and fill up her skin with the hog-gut you do, as you have."

"Don't you think that because you wear whiskers and breeches that you are privileged by God. She has as good a right as you have to walk down the street with half a plug of tobacco sticking out of her mouth and spitting enough to drown a jackrabbit as you have."

"I wouldn't clean out your old spittoon for you. I'd throw it at your head. Yes, sir."

Do we need more of the same sort?

4. There are also some statements, fortunately few—but enough—which are plainly indecent. Take the following instances and remember they are the words of a professed minister of the Gospel of Christ spoken at a so-called religious service. See if you approve of them.

"I can understand why young bloods go in for dancing, but some of you old ginks—good night."

"Ma and I stopped in to look at a ball at an inaugura-

tion ceremony. Well, I will be horn-swaggled if I didn't see a woman there dancing with all the men, and she wore a collar of her gown around her waist. She had a little corset on—Oh, I can't describe it."

"You stand there, and watch man after man as he claims her hand and puts his name on her list. Perhaps that fellow was her lover and you won her hand and you stand there and watch your wife folded in his long, voluptuous, sensual embrace, their bodies swaying one against the other, their limbs twining and entwining, her head resting on his breast, they breathe the vitiated air beneath the glittering candelabra, and the spell of the music, and you stand there and tell me that there is no harm in it! You're too low down for me.

I want to see the color of some buck's hair that can dance with my wife! I'm going to monopolize that hugging myself."

"Then Herodias came in, and danced with her foot stuck out to a quarter to 12, and old Herod said, 'Sis, you're a peach. You can have anything you want, even to the half of my kingdom.' She hiked off to her licentious mother."

"Why a man with red blood in his veins can't look at half the women on the streets now and not have impure thoughts.

Little girl, you look so small,
Don't you wear no clothes at all?
Don't you wear no chemise shirt?
Don't you wear no petty skirt?
Don't you wear no underclothes?
But your corset and your hose?"

No decent person can read these quotations without shame.

Every passage quoted in this article is taken from the official copyrighted report of Mr. Sunday's Philadelphia addresses, published with his sanction in the Philadelphia *Evening Telegraph* during January and February. Their accuracy cannot be questioned. It is true that these quotations are not the main stock and substance of his addresses, but some of the occasional ornaments, giving what is called

"punch" to his discourses. They are things of the sort singled out for special separate printing in the *Evening Telegraph,* often in large type, as "jolts." So they are.

On March 12th at the close of Mr. Sunday's "campaign" in Philadelphia the *Public Ledger* of that city, a journal which has never been unfriendly to the Christian faith, editorially reviews the aspects and results of his teaching as follows:

> "Without minimizing in the slightest the good that may result from the 'Billy' Sunday campaign in awakening a new religious interest in the community, it can be said beyond a doubt that he has done incalculable harm in certain directions.
>
> "Here are some aspects of his teaching that are worse than pagan: 'It's a good thing I'm not God for fifteen minutes. If I were, I'd fill your papers with obituaries and fill freight cars with the dead.' No one who knows the history of Jesus Christ can accept such a statement as representative of the One Who came 'not to destroy, but to save,' Who taught the parable of the prodigal son, Who refused the aid of 'ten legions of angels' when His enemies were hounding Him to death, Who prayed while dying 'Father, forgive them; they know what they do.' "

So in the name of decency and of the purity and sanctity of our Christian faith Princeton University positively refuses to approve Mr. Sunday's performances as suitable for the edification of our students. In times of hysterical excitement we think it our right and duty to stand firm against all inflammatory mob-oratory in whatever field it may appear. For his quiet and sensible stand in this matter President Hibben deserves the thanks of all friends of education and religion.

Andrew F. West,
Dean of the Graduate School,
Princeton University.

Princeton,
April 6, 1915.